

Libby Community Advisory Group Meeting Summary May 25, 2000

Introductions

Gerald Mueller and Libby Community Advisory Group (CAG) members present introduced themselves. A list of the members in attendance is attached below as Appendix 1.

Agenda

Mr. Mueller reviewed an agenda for this meeting including the following topics:

- May 11, 2000 Meeting Summary Correction
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Report
- W.R. Grace Medical Plan
- EPA Written Responses to CAG Member Questions
- Lincoln County Responses to CAG Member Questions
- W.R. Grace Responses to CAG Member Questions
- Public Comment Period
- Next Steps - Meeting Date and Agenda

May 11, 2000 Meeting Summary Correction

Ron Anderson, Director of the Lincoln County Department of Environmental Health, stated that the May 11, 2000 meeting summary of the scope of the \$12,000 grant his department received from the National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO) was too narrow. The purpose includes:

- Preparing a community profile (e.g. compiling relevant site history and community demographics, identifying the target audience, and identifying and documenting community health concerns;
- Collaborating with the community to assess environmental health education needs;
- Developing an action plan to meet those needs; and
- Giving NACCHO periodic status updates.

EPA Report

Paul Peronard reported on five topics on behalf of EPA.

Formal Decision to Begin Cleanups

EPA has formally ordered W.R. Grace to clean up the export site, and W.R. Grace has expressed its intent to comply with the clean-up order. The text of the order and the work plan for the export site cleanup will be available beginning May 30, 2000 at the EPA Information Center in Libby. The cleanup is planned to last 20 weeks plus extra time for site restoration that will extend through the winter. The Burnetts and their business will be moved as a part of the export site cleanup.

As previously reported, EPA will clean up the screening plant. The first order of business will be moving the Parkers. Next the buildings will be dismantled, contaminated soils will be excavated, and finally, the site will be restored. Five parcels of property owned by the Parkers, Wise, Mark Owens, and two others are involved with this site. Two piles of contaminated soils across the river will also be addressed. The screening plant cleanup will begin in late June or early July and should be completed, except for the restoration, by the end of summer. EPA intends to keep as much of the employment local as possible. Skilled equipment operators and truck drivers will be hired here and

asbestos handling training will be provided them. People interested in possible employment should stop by the EPA Information Center and put their name on a list. Local housing will be needed for 8 to 12 people working for EPA's prime contractor, MARCORE, and a like amount for employee's of W.R. Grace. EPA will be setting up a mobile laboratory in Libby including a scanning electron microscope as a part of the cleanup.

CAG Member Question - What kind of trucks will be used and will EPA use local trucks?

Answer - Yes, EPA will use local trucks, and would prefer end-dump types because they are easier to cover to prevent dust escapement. Trucks must be dedicated to the clean-up work so they will be unavailable for other jobs while used for this work. Respiratory protection will be provided to drivers.

CAG Member Question - Is there any response to the CAG's letter to EPA and ATSDR requesting funding to help establish the community medical trust?

Answer - Not yet.

Audience Member Question - Has EPA approved the county oiling Raintree Road?

Answer - Yes, and during the screening plant cleanup, full-time dust abatement, either or both water and magnesium chloride, will be provided.

ATSDR Medical Screening

Through last Saturday, May 21, 2000, some 1,139 households have been contacted and 1,286 individuals have been scheduled for screening. About 800 people have been declared ineligible for screening because of failure to meet the screening criteria, i.e. people must have lived, worked, gone to school, or played in Libby for a total of six months prior to December 31, 1990. Some 186 eligible people chose not to be screened, including 135 people who are already diagnosed. A projection of the participation rate to date predicts that about 3,500 people will be screened in total. Should this projection prove accurate, this project will screen the largest number of people ever for a toxic exposure at a single location in this country. The x-ray facility bid will be awarded next week.

Funding for People No Longer Living in Libby

Money will not be available until the next fiscal year, i.e. after October 1, 2000. The EPA construction budget has been cut in half, and therefore this funding is not guaranteed. The CAG agreed that the letter drafted by Mayor Berget addressing this funding issue should be signed by CAG members and mailed.

Senator Baucus Libby Meeting

Senator Baucus will hold a meeting in Libby on May 31, 2000 at the VFW Hall at 10:00 a.m. Updates from people who testified at the last meeting will be requested. A block of time larger than the Senator's last Libby meeting for questions and answers will be provided.

Stress Management Team

The team that Wendy Thomi spoke of last meeting, consisting of Jan Shubert of EPA and Pam Tucker, an ATSDR psychiatrist, will be in Libby from June 13 to June 24. This team will assess the community's need for stress management services resulting from issues related to asbestos contamination and exposure. They will visit with Libby counselors to assess the need for additional education and training. They would like meet with CAG members June 15, and will come to the CAG meeting on June 22.

Presentation by Clinton Maynard

Clinton Maynard addressed the CAG. He pointed out that in December 1975, four locations in Libby had ambient air concentrations of asbestos roughly five to ten times the OSHA standard of 0.15 fibers per cubic centimeter. If breathed for 24 hours, these concentrations lead to breathing from 9 million to 20 million fibers per day:

| Location | Concentration | Fibers Per Day |
|------------------|---------------|----------------|
| St. Regis Office | 1.55 | 20,000,000 |
| Hospital | 1.1 | 15,000,000 |
| J.C. Penny | 0.67 | 9,000,000 |

Mr. Maynard also argued that by lowering the immune system, these levels of exposures can cause many kinds of cancers in addition to those normally attributed to asbestos exposure.

Audience Member Statement - It is vital that everyone eligible should be screened in the ATSDR program. The screening may provide Libby's only opportunity for obtaining funding and medical research.

Audience Member Question - Why should I or my family be screened if I didn't work at the mine?

Answer - If you lived in Libby prior to 1990, you were probably exposed to more asbestos than is safe.

W.R. Grace Medical Plan

Alan Stringer summarized and took questions regarding the W.R. Grace medical plan. Mr. Stringer passed out two documents, the program guidelines and application form. He did not have enough copies of the latest version of the plan to pass out to the CAG and audience. The plan is now in effect for those people meeting its eligibility criteria. About one to one and a half weeks after applying, qualified people should receive a temporary plan identification card and a permanent card should follow in three to five weeks. W.R. Grace has sent a copy of the plan to all Libby area doctors and to Dr. Obermiller of Kalispell and Dr. Whitehouse of Spokane. To date, two to three dozen applications have been handed out and six to ten have been submitted.

According to Mr. Stringer, W.R. Grace announced that a plan would be available on January 25, 2000, and the first version was released on April 3. After receiving comments from the Libby medical community, including Dr. Black and St. John's Hospital, the plan was revised. The plan is administered by Health Network of America. A representative of this firm, Dr. Kardos, will visit the Libby medical community and Dr. Obermiller and Dr. Whitehouse during June to discuss the plan. While it urges those who are eligible to use it now, W.R. Grace does not view the plan as finalized, and is willing to make changes to it as the need to do so arises. W.R. Grace wants people who are suffering from asbestos-related disease to receive the treatment that they need.

During the ensuing discussion, various CAG members expressed concern about the plan eligibility requirements, coverages, and whether it will continue to be available. Some were concerned that the eligibility requirements would exclude people who need treatment or continued monitoring for asbestos related disease. Mr. Stringer stated that the plan would be available as long as the parent company, W.R. Grace, remains in business. Mr. Stringer and the CAG agreed to the following next steps regarding the medical plan:

- During June, in addition to meeting with members of the medical community, Dr. Kardos will meet with CAG members and interested members of the Libby public to discuss the plan and answer questions regarding plan eligibility requirements and coverages.
- Health Network of America's Kathleen Robinson, will also be asked by W.R. Grace to come to Libby during June to discuss enrollment and claims processing procedures with St. John's Hospital staff and the public.
- W.R. Grace will prepare some typical scenarios of how people afflicted with various asbestos-related disease would fare under the plan so that factors such as the usual and customary treatment costs would be identified.
- After these meetings in June, the CAG will revisit the W.R. Grace medical plan.

EPA Written Response to CAG Member Questions

CAG members had no comments or questions about EPA's April 27, 2000 written responses to the 45 written member questions.

Other CAG Member and Audience Questions and Statements

- *Question: I know of a private dump that should be cleaned up. Will EPA address it?*
Answer - Yes, just let us know where it is.
- *Question: What should people do who have asbestos contaminated insulation in their homes?*
Answer: EPA does not plan to reach a conclusion about this issue until the end of the year. The sampling program is not designed to address any specific house, but rather to assess contamination community wide. In general, sampling to date indicates vermiculite home insulation is contaminated with 1.5 to 2% asbestos fibers. However, the problem is not contaminated insulation per se, but air borne asbestos fibers that are breathed. Sampling to date has not revealed any correlation between insulation asbestos concentrations and ambient air concentrations. EPA's general advise is not to handle or stir up insulation. If possible seal it and leave it alone. If it cannot safely be sealed, the insulation should be removed by a certified asbestos removal firm.
- *Question: Can I till my garden?*
Answer - We don't know. The sampling results are mixed. Roughly 20% of gardens have at least trace amounts of asbestos, and we cannot say that trace amounts are safe. Sometimes we see elevated air concentrations apparently associated with gardens. EPA plans to go back to gardens contaminated with asbestos and roto-till them and measure asbestos air concentrations.
- *Question: Since OSHA has specific concentration standards, why should we be concerned about trace amounts?*
Answer - No dose response curve exists for asbestos toxicity; risk is proportional to asbestos concentration. For other toxics, at some dosage, the bodies defense mechanism is overwhelmed and standards are set to protect against this level. With asbestos no such level exists. The OSHA or occupational standard is set to allow only one additional asbestos-related death per 100 to 250 cancer deaths. Environmental standards are set to allow only 1 additional cancer per 10,000 deaths. The present environmental standard reflects only our present technology to detect asbestos fibers and is not related to any risk level. We simply cannot detect using polarized light microscopy lower than 1% asbestos concentration. This standard covers 94-95% of the materials now in commerce.
- *Statement - We need a presentation from ATSDR on implications of smoking and asbestos exposure.*
Answer - EPA will request ATSDR to make such a presentation at a future CAG meeting.
- *Statement - We should lean on people to schedule screening.*
- *Statement - The following web site is a good one for considering asbestos issues: www.marf.org.*

- *Statement - We should emphasize at Senator Baucus' hearing that Libby's long range and research needs must be met.*

Next Meeting

The next meetings are scheduled on Thursday, June 8, and June 22, 2000 from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Ponderosa Room of the Libby City Hall. The June 8 agenda will include an update on the \$11.5 million federal appropriation for Libby, a report from the community trust steering committee, and Lincoln County's and W.R. Grace's written responses to CAG member questions.

Appendix 1
CAG Member Attendance List
May 25, 2000

| Name | Group/Organization Represented |
|--------------------------|---|
| Kerry Beasley | St. Johns Lutheran Hospital |
| Commissioner John Konzen | Lincoln County |
| Ken Hayes | Lincoln County Council on Aging (Alternate for Wilbur Wilson) |
| Mike Switzer | Asbestos Victim |
| Ron Anderson | Lincoln County |
| Brad Black | Lincoln County Health Officer |
| George Bauer | City of Libby |
| Cyrus Lee | Kootenai Valley Headstart |
| Bob Tunis | Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation |
| John Constan | DEQ |
| Norita Skramstad | Asbestos Victims |
| Gayla Benefield | LCAVRO |
| K.W. Maki | Libby School District |
| Paul Peronard | Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) On-Scene Coordinator |
| Leroy Thom | Former Grace union employee and local businessman |
| David F. Latham | The Montanian |
| Carol Ray | Montana Covering Kids |
| Bob Zimmerman | Cabinet Resource Group |